

The Perfection of Craft Training in the Neapolitan Conservatories

In the course of the eighteenth century the four conservatories in Naples trained hundreds of future composers. More importantly, they produced perhaps three fourths of the composers then most famous across Europe.¹ Toward the end of that line came Gaspare Spontini (1774–1851), who finished his training just before a decade of economic upheaval and political revolution led to the collapse of the old conservatories in the early nineteenth century.

Spontini was born in Maiolati, a small town in the hills of Le Marche. The town's modern name—Maiolati Spontini—gives a measure of his eventual fame. In 1793 he left Maiolati and journeyed to Naples where, at the relatively advanced age of nineteen, he enrolled in the Conservatorio di Santa Maria della Pietà dei Turchini. There he studied with the maestros Nicola Sala and Giacomo Tritto, perhaps having additional lessons from Domenico Cimarosa and later Niccolò Piccinni. The modern Naples Conservatory has preserved thousands of documents from the old conservatories, and among them is a fugal exposition by Spontini.² It dates from August 5, 1795 and was part of an examination given by three maestros of the conservatory to Spontini and three other students. The opening measures of his effort are shown in Musical Example 1.

Musical Example 1 A fugal exposition in F major by Spontini, written for an examination

Spontini wrote his exposition in the key of F major on a subject provided by the maestros (soprano voice, m. 1). The initial subject appears with a countersubject (alto voice, m. 1). Thus the answer (in C major, bass voice, m. 4) enters as the third voice in play. Many of the fugues by the Italian-trained Handel follow a similar practice, though it is comparatively rare in the fugues of J. S. Bach. The maestros marked three errors on the first page, labeled “1,” “2,” and “3,” with each number underlined twice (see Mus. Ex. 1). On the preserved fair-copy manuscript, the errors were spelled out at the bottom of the page in the form of footnotes, and each of the maestros signed this official record of the examination.

Referring to error number one, they wrote “The alto should not remain holding the third [above the bass] while the soprano sounds the fourth” (*Il contralto non puoi stare fermo colla terza, nel mentre che il soprano mette la quarta*). Concerning error number two, they cautioned

that “the D3 in the bass should take the third [in the alto] and not the fourth” (Il delasolrè del Basso vuole la terza e non la quarta). And for the third error (which matches the same point in the subject marked by the first error), the maestros may have betrayed some cumulative displeasure by declaring that “the parts are not well positioned, and it is not good to hold the F4 in the alto above the G3 in the bass” (Le parti non stan ben disposte e l’effaut del contralto no stà bene tenuto soprà il gesolreut del Basso).

To anyone unfamiliar with the traditional study of fugue, these demerits must seem trivial and overly pedantic. Indeed the typical modern listener will not perceive any of the errors as sounding wrong or even slightly amiss. The examining maestros, however, were pointing out musical behaviors that fell below the refined standards of a royal court or cathedral. The masters were also acting as gatekeepers for the informal guild of trained composers and music directors. Spontini had served a short apprenticeship in the conservatory, and his examination in fugue was one of the tests for qualifying as a young master or *mastricello* (also called a *sottomaestro* or *maestrino*). Most students came to the conservatories at a much earlier age, in many cases as young as seven,³ and they would stay for a decade or more. Those boys would have had ample time to learn the subtle musical behaviors that Spontini violated. One might say that, unlike those who had grown up in the conservatory as fluent *contrapuntisti*, Spontini “spoke” counterpoint with a slight accent. Three faults within an exposition were too many for the examiners, and Spontini failed to advance as a *mastricello*. Yet his failure may have been a blessing in disguise, for he quickly shifted his focus to comic opera, and his success in that arena led to his later success in Paris. His lack of a long, carefully supervised apprenticeship had robbed him of that perfection of technique so prized in the eighteenth century, but his natural talent for musical drama, aided in part by the experienced counsel of Cimarosa and Piccinni, flowered in the more dynamic, less punctilious world of early Romantic opera.

Apprenticeship

Examinations given to apprentices were common in all the craft guilds of the time, and literally dozens of guilds operated in any large city. Almost every product and service was controlled by a guild whose members guarded the secrets of its craft and maintained a monopoly on its practice. Guilds had become well established by the fifteenth century, and in sixteenth-century England they were given legal status by royal statute.⁴ Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger* was based on a guild in sixteenth-century Germany, the guild of “master singers.” The opera’s plot depends crucially on guild examinations and the marking of errors. Craft guilds were thus not casual clubs. Their members’ livelihoods depended on everyone respecting the guild’s rules and procedures. The rules could even have legal force, and guilds in Italy often had their rules published with an endorsement by the Pope.

In 1628, shortly before the conservatories in Naples began to hire professional musicians as maestros, the guild of blacksmiths (*ferrari*) in the northern Italian city of Reggio published their rule book. The exhaustive details of the guild's organization and hierarchy occupy the first twenty-nine chapters. Chapter thirty then lays out the requirements for a candidate's admission: "He who desires to enter the said art must be an honest man of good health, reputation, and condition, and should have a forge, anvil, workrooms, and capital, and actually work, and have practiced the craft ten years straight, and had his own shop for five years, and be twenty-five years of age."⁵ A smith meeting these criteria could announce his candidacy in public on the first Sunday in January. "The guild will then elect four suitable and adequate masters for the purpose of going to see him at work, this person who would join us, and to swear that he is an adequate master."⁶

Closer to Spontini's own time, the regulations for the guild of Roman wool-merchants (*Ars lanae*, 1759), with endorsements by three successive Popes, described the entrance examination in somewhat more detail. At any time of the year a candidate could make his intentions known to one of the guild's counselors. That counselor would then meet with the other counselors, auditors, and the treasurer of the guild to determine "the day, the precise hour, and also the shop of one of the counselors in which the examination will be held."⁷ At the appointed time and place each of the stated officers of the guild, in company with its recording secretary, "should pose one or more questions to the one being examined, or alternatively, according to the judgement of the examiners, make him give a demonstration regarding our profession and art."⁸ The secretary would then provide a written record of the questions, answers, and demonstrations, along with the private opinions of the examiners, to the president of the guild who would determine the success or failure of the candidate. So Spontini's examination was typical of such tests, with multiple masters making an evaluation of his fugal "demonstration," and a "written record" being preserved for the craft authorities, in this case the "counselors" of the conservatory.

The regulations of neither guild said anything about how one first learned a craft. The guilds had no classrooms, curricula, or appointed teachers. A child would begin to learn a craft through a "system of apprenticeship, which necessitated the handing of the child to the master or mistress from whom it was to learn the craft or 'mystery' which would afterwards be its means of livelihood."⁹ Each master was free to take on several young apprentices, and each child's nearly free labor was the master's compensation for allowing him or her to observe the craft and to learn the "mystery" by doing small parts of it. Apprentices would begin as little more than child servants, often indentured for seven or more years by written contract. In the novel *David Copperfield* (1850) by Charles Dickens, young David "became, at ten years old, a little laboring hind [=rustic] in the service of Murdstone and Grinby," wine merchants. In David's words, "When the empty bottles ran short, there were labels to be pasted on full ones, or corks to be fitted to them, or seals to be put upon the corks, or finished bottles to be packed in casks."¹⁰

Copperfield's misfortune was to have an uncaring, exploitive master who set him to work at endless unskilled tasks that revealed scarce any mystery. More fortunate apprentices, as they gained experience in their craft, could be groomed to take on more skilled tasks, eventually becoming independent journeymen in their late teens or even masters in their twenties. A wise master with a gift for imparting his skill and knowledge could produce many future masters, whereas apprentices doomed to Dickensian toil and abuse would likely spend their lives as base laborers.

The professions of law and medicine viewed themselves as being above the “mechanical arts” practiced by guilds. Yet eighteenth-century training in law or medicine was not so different from the methods practiced in the guilds. Apprenticeship played a far greater role in legal training, for instance, than it does today. The historian C. W. Brooks has described the situation in England:

The history of legal training between roughly 1700 and 1850 is clear enough in its broadest outlines. There was a gradual evolution from apprenticeship, and a low level of institutional provision or regulation, towards more rigorous supervision and, eventually, the creation of more formal “educational” structures such as lectures and written examinations. . . . For many centuries before 1700 legal training had revolved around two powerful traditions, one vocational, the other more self-consciously liberal and academic. Clerkship, which amounted to apprenticeship in almost everything but name, had been for centuries the method by which young men trained for and entered the branch of the profession, that of the attorneys and solicitors, which dealt most immediately with clients and specialized in the procedural aspects of litigation. On the other hand . . . the inns of court in London had since the middle ages provided an institutional setting and some formal instruction in the form of lectures and moots for those intending to practice as barristers—the lawyers who pleaded before the royal courts and from whom the judiciary were selected.¹¹

Music training in Europe was typified by local apprenticeship and lacked “the institutional setting and . . . formal instruction” seen in the upper echelons of British legal education (i.e., the inns of court). Important cathedrals certainly qualified as institutions, and their choir schools provided a basic education, but their musicians rarely organized into independent guilds.¹² The established guilds of civic musicians in northern Europe¹³ (*Stadtpfeifer*) could also provide a basic education, but not one designed to prepare a student for elite courtly performance or composition. In consequence, a young musician with the talent and desire to become an elite musician needed to locate an elite maestro. The abilities of that master—both in his craft and in the teaching of that craft—would go a long way toward determining the future success or failure of the apprentice. A provincial master who had himself been apprenticed to a provincial master, could likely take his own apprentices only so far.

For the truly talented youth it was almost always necessary to leave home in search of one of the great masters of the age. A young and gifted eighteenth-century violinist might travel to Padua to apprentice with Giuseppe Tartini (1692–1770). That was what happened with the twelve-year-old Pietro Nardini (1722–1793), who journeyed more than 300 kilometers to begin his apprenticeship with the Paduan maestro. Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713) in Rome was another such famous maestro, and his young apprentice Giovanni Battista Somis (1686–1763) had to make an almost 700-kilometer trek from Turin. Others, like Spontini, ventured to remote Naples from all corners of Europe. The costs, perils, and uncertainties of such a path helped to maintain local, provincial training as the norm, at least for boys too young to travel independently or who lacked princely patronage and protection.

In the port city of sixteenth-century Naples, the combination of plague, poverty, and hundreds of transient sailors resulted in a great number of orphans and foundlings. Over the course of several decades the Catholic church established four homes to care for or “conserve” these children (*conservatori*). Lacking any family connections, the children would need to learn a craft if they were to survive as adults. As mentioned earlier, the conservatories began to hire professional musicians in the mid-seventeenth century. The Church was already, in a manner of speaking, heavily involved in show business, producing musical performances for services and festivals at all of its churches, monasteries, convents, and seminaries. As music students progressed in their lessons, the Church could employ them as members of choirs or orchestras, thus lowering the effective cost of those services. And as opera grew in importance and became increasing lavish through the patronage of Austrian or Spanish rulers, the conservatories could actually rent out their young musicians to supplement the opera orchestras and church-festival choirs. As the conservatories prospered they were able to hire ever more illustrious maestros. By the eighteenth century these institutions had grown to house hundreds of boys, including paying students.¹⁴

The inns of court in London, as mentioned earlier, were the eighteenth-century institutions responsible for training the elite lawyers and future judges of England. There were four such institutions, Gray's Inn, Lincoln's Inn, The Inner Temple, and The Middle Temple, all established in earlier centuries. The inns could provide what clerkship lacked: training focused on the student rather than on the production goods or services, a critical mass of students, a group of distinguished teachers, a national rather than a local or provincial outlook, proximity to the royal courts, and a network of high-level contacts. In most respects the four conservatories of eighteenth-century Naples played the same or similar roles. The training of musicians had become their *de facto* purpose. Students came to the conservatories from all over Europe. Maestros like Francesco Durante (1684–1755) or Leonardo Leo (1694–1744) were among the premier composers of the day. Students lived and interacted with students studying other instruments, with singers (and the castrati), and with organists and future music directors. Students could hear famous artists perform at the San Carlo opera house, then the largest in the

world, and they could join in performances at the grandest churches in Naples. For graduates of these conservatories, the hundreds upon hundreds of prior graduates working all over Europe constituted a valuable professional network that functioned like a loosely organized guild.

What did a student learn at a Neapolitan conservatory? Listing the subjects of instruction—solfeggio, counterpoint, keyboard¹⁵—might give a misleading impression, given that subjects with the same titles are still taught today. A wide gulf separates the twenty-year-old college music student of today from a twelve-year-old orphan in Naples apprenticed as a pauper to one of the conservatories. In an economic sense, modern students are like consumers who select products (courses) purchased for them by their parents or by the state. These products come with consumer guides (textbooks) which, when read and digested, are intended to transmit what wise consumers ought to know for their enjoyment of the product. The orphan boy at a conservatory, by contrast, was little more than a slave. Even his allotment of bread was limited by conservatory rules.¹⁶ Like any other apprentice, his job was to learn the craft, whether he enjoyed it or not. He practiced this craft from sunrise to sunset, six days a week, with no set vacations, often for a decade.

The focus of craft training was the proper imitation of models provided by the master:

The craft system of education fulfilled one fundamental requisite of educational theory: that the pupil form himself upon a model. The model was not within the mind itself but was an external “form” which was to be imitated. In so doing, the pupil learned a just representation of a thing, or person, imitated, which afterwards could be deviated from by his making further searches from his own “stock” or from the stock of others.¹⁷

The model might be more accurately described as a complex web of models extending from the smallest detail to the grandest design. It may be easier to illustrate this hierarchy of models by first exploring the craft training of draftsmen.

The Models of a Master Draftsman

Johann David Preissler (1666–1737) was born into a prominent German family of draftsmen and engravers. His apprenticeship from age ten was served first within his own family, and then with a master painter. He spent his twenties in Italy as a journeyman, and finally returned to Nuremberg as a respected master. Beginning in the late 1720s he published a series of pattern books intended to introduce the amateur to the art of drawing.¹⁸ While these books are not indicative of the depth of training that an apprentice would receive over the course of a decade, they do nevertheless reveal an eighteenth-century draftsman’s basic orientation to the problems of representing three-dimensional human forms in two dimensions.

The simplest, most basic models consisted of straight lines and controlled curves. Reproducing them with skill and facility was a prerequisite to any type of drawing. Preissler's second type of model involved adapting those lines and curves to depict body parts. Figure 1 reproduces his models for an ear. Notice that he begins with a simple axis on the left of the figure and then proceeds to add in various curves and details until he creates the illusion of an ear surrounded by curls.¹⁹

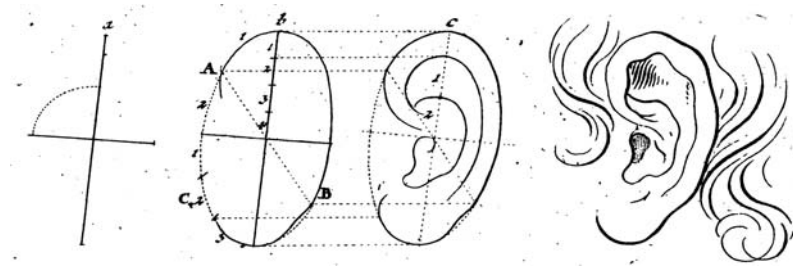


Figure 1. Preissler's model for drawing an ear.

His third type of model involved the combining of parts. Preissler showed, for instance, how to integrate the eyes, nose, ears, and so forth into a representative head (see Figure 2):²⁰

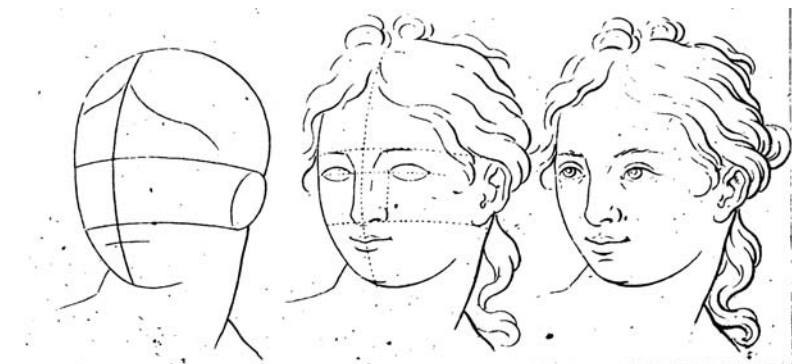


Figure 2. Preissler's model for drawing a female head.

To draw the framework for a head, he begins with the so-called "oval-and-cross" schema,²¹ where the oval is the outline of the head and the cross is formed from the vertical line of the nose and the horizontal line of the eyes (Preissler uses two horizontals to form a band that terminates at the ear). As he did in Figure 1, he shows progressive elaborations of the oval-and-cross schema from left to right.

A quite different kind of model involves highly schematized stick figures representing bodies in various positions of rest or motion. Figure 3 shows his model for a seated,

contemplative man, with the oval-and-cross schema placed on top of a skeletal-like stick figure. As with previous models, it forms the basis for progressive stages of elaboration (shown in Fig. 3 from left to right, though originally the second two figures appeared on a separate page).²²



Figure 3. Preissler's model for drawing a seated, contemplative man.

His final class of model deals with light and shade (*chiaroscuro*), drapery, and special techniques of engraving. Figure 4 shows Preissler's design for a seated female clothed in a robe or dress with many folds, rendered through various techniques of engraving.²³



Figure 4. Preissler's model for engraving a seated, clothed woman.

Preissler's models are all closely interrelated: the proper engraving of a seated lady requires skill in drawing the body underneath her drapery (shown in dotted lines in Fig. 4), which requires skill in sketching a properly proportioned pose (the stick figure), which requires the ability to place and draw a oval-and-cross schema at the correct angle, which requires that one can adapt and draw the component ears, eyes, lips, and so forth, which requires facility with all

the basics of drawing. An apprentice draftsman would need to master this whole suite of disparate skills before he could hope to qualify as a master. At each level in this graphical hierarchy the models were quite different from the models at other levels. For instance, the stick-figure pose was nothing like a properly drawn ear, which was nothing like the shading of drapery. All these disparate models and the skills they required came together and supported each other in the complete drawing.

The Models of the Neapolitan Conservatories

For the musical apprentice in Naples, learning the rudiments of scales, intervals, and small melodic figures was the first step. These simple items were like the lines and curves learned by the beginning draftsmen. When apprentice draftsmen progressed to draw small body parts, they were practicing how to combine lines. This skill of combining lines was also a next step for the apprentice musician—practical counterpoint. There were, of course, no musical equivalents to parts of the face, for instance. But what apprentice musicians learned were brief contrapuntal combinations associated with routine musical gestures. The first of these were standard cadences. Then a boy might learn the figured-bass harmonization of ascending and descending scales (the Rule of the Octave), the treatment of the most common dissonances, the patterns in which accidentals cause modulations, and a variety of standard sequences. All of these preliminary, small patterns were covered in the “rules” or *regole* of the Neapolitan maestros. The boys memorized these patterns either by rote or from manuscripts of their master’s *regole*. It was not until 1775 that these Neapolitan rules were first printed.²⁴ And it was not until the twenty-first century that the implicit hierarchy within these rules was first described by Giorgio Sanguinetti.²⁵

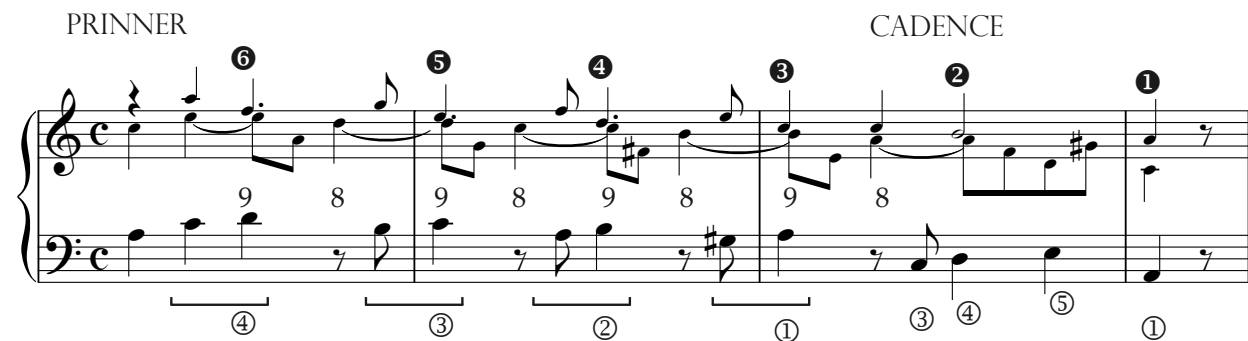
The next higher level in Preissler’s hierarchy contains models for composite forms like the human head or torso. The musical equivalent was probably a phrase written or performed in at least two voices. Just as someone drawing a head needed to unite all its component parts, so too an apprentice musician, especially one seeking to compose, needed to learn to connect small patterns of rhythm, dissonance, melody, bass, and harmony into a satisfying whole. For the apprentice artist, real human heads provided a ready standard of comparison. For the apprentice musician, real compositions and specially composed instructional pieces served that purpose. Three types of Neapolitan instructional compositions were influential in teaching phraseology. The first were *solfeggi*—ornate melodies paired with unfigured basses. It is believed the student sang while the maestro played the accompaniment (this was the practice preserved in the nineteenth century at the Paris Conservatory).²⁶ The second were *intavolature*—keyboard works generally of a two-voice texture. And the third were *partimenti*—single line compositions (predominantly in bass clef but often switching between clefs) to which the student was to add another part, a chordal accompaniment, or even fugal entries.

In early sets of *regole* like those of the great Neapolitan maestro Francesco Durante, what appear to be just rudimentary patterns of figured bass were intended as guides to the realization of *unfigured* basses. The pattern in the bass was a cue to a coordinated movement of two or more voices, a movement that needed to be learned as a reflex action. Take for instance the small pattern shown in Musical Example 2. It illustrates the rule that “when the partimento ascends by half step, it takes the 6th (quando il partimento ascende di mezzo tono vuole la 6a).²⁷



Music Example 2 The contrapuntal pattern for an ascending half-step in the bass, as shown in Durante’s *regole*

Durante’s more advanced musical exemplars combined small sequences, dissonances, cadences, and modulations. Musical Example 3 presents the first phrase of an exemplar that Durante wrote to illustrate the rule “On the preparation of the 9th, which stems from the 3rd (Della formazione della nona la quale nasce dalla 3a). The smaller notes on the treble staff are my suggestion for how a student might have realized Durante’s partimento bass.



Musical Example 3 A larger exemplar from Durante’s *regole*, intended to show 9–8 suspensions

The four 9–8 suspensions occur over the bass scale degrees (in A minor) ④–③–②–①. This larger pattern, what I have previously termed a Prinner,²⁸ leads into a cadence in the home key. The four modern brackets under the bass indicate where the contrapuntal pattern of Musical Example 2 can be employed. Above these brackets only the second and fourth ascents of the bass are by half steps, but other *regole* show that a “6” was presumed for the first note of each pair,

especially when preceded by the descent of a third. So both the component parts of 9–8 suspensions and ascending steps in the bass can be combined within the Prinner. The perceptive apprentice would further realize that both the Prinner and cadence could be smoothly connected by a steady, stepwise melodic descent through the tones of the hexachord on A: ⑥–⑤–④–③–②–① (see Mus. Ex. 2).

A Durante exemplar of a rising sequence leading to a cadence in C major, from the same collection of *regole*, is shown in Musical Example 4. As before, the smaller notes on the treble staff are my suggestion for a realization of Durante’s partimento bass. Joseph Riepel, writing in 1755, used the term *monte* (“mountain”) for this type of sequence.²⁹ Durante extends his sequence from ④ all the way up to ① before beginning a cadence. The modern brackets again show how the component pattern of Musical Example 2 can be incorporated into the Monte sequence. Note also that all three voices in the suggested realization use the same small melodic motive, and that the outer voices are in canon.

MONTE CADENCE

Musical Example 4 Durante’s exemplar of a rising sequence

For a student of Preissler’s book, the next type of model was the stick figure, which showed how to connect and position the limbs, torso, and head in various attitudes. For the apprentice in a Neapolitan conservatory, instructional compositions provided models for the analogous art of connecting phrases. As mentioned earlier, *intavolature* were small keyboard works suitable for students. Imagine a student learning the intavolatura shown in Musical Example 4. This work by Gaetano Greco (ca. 1657–ca. 1728), his “*Courante called ‘La Baldouina’*” (*Corrente detto La Baldouina*³⁰), contains five units connected in series. The first unit (mm. 1–2) serves as an opening gambit (repeated), with neighbor notes in the bass and descending triads in the melody. The second unit is a Prinner in the home key of C major. The third unit is a Prinner in the key of G major, the fourth unit is a cadence (in G major), and the fifth unit is the Monte back in the key of C major. I have added figured-bass numbers to the Monte to show how, compared to Durante’s exemplar, it begins “early” with a “6” on E3 that precedes the “5” on F3. Historically, of course, Greco is from the generation before Durante, and Durante was more likely to have emulated Greco than the reverse.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Gaetano Greco's *La Baldouina*. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff joined by a brace. The first system (measures 1-6) is labeled 'OPENING GAMBIT' and 'PRINNER'. The second system (measures 7-10) is labeled 'CADENCE' and 'MONTE'. The third system (measures 11-15) continues the 'MONTE' section. Fingerings are indicated by circled numbers 1-6. The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks.

Musical Example 5 Gaetano Greco, *La Baldouina*, Naples, ca. 1690s?

For Preissler, the stick figure was only a means to an end. It needed first to be fleshed out, clothed, and shaded before one could claim a finished drawing. In music, those processes of elaboration and decoration fell under the rubrics of “diminution” and, in professional composition, “orchestration.” In diminution, the “stick figure” of a simple musical skeleton like Greco’s *La Baldouina* was decorated with figurations composed of shorter note values. Musical Example 6 shows an excerpt from a C-major partimento by Leonardo Leo, a contemporary of Durante and, beginning at age nine, a student of Greco. Ordinarily a partimento contained only one notated voice. But a manuscript of Leo’s partimenti preserved in Bologna contains a few passages where a second voice has been added.³¹ The passage in question (Mus. Ex. 6) simultaneously presents a Prinner, circle-of-fifths harmonies, and iterations of the 6-chord pattern (marked by brackets; cf. Mus. Ex. 2), all highly decorated by long runs of eighth notes terminating in an emphatic cadence. The bass, in half notes, rises until it reaches the first core tone of the Prinner bass (④). It then leaps down to rise again toward the next core tone.

PRINNER

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled 'PRINNER', consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) in common time. The treble staff contains a continuous eighth-note melody with six circled numbers (6) above it. The bass staff contains a simple accompaniment with four circled numbers (4) and three circled numbers (3) below it. The second system, labeled 'CADENCE', also has two staves. The treble staff has a melody with four circled numbers (4), three circled numbers (3), and three circled numbers (1) above it. The bass staff has a simple accompaniment with two circled numbers (2), one circled number (1), and a sequence of circled numbers (3, 4, 3, 4, 5, 1, 5, 1) below it.

CADENCE

Musical Example 6 Diminutions on a Prinner, from a partimento by Leonardo Leo

If we took Greco’s *La Baldouina* as our “stick figure,” and draped it in folds of diminutions, we might arrive at music much like that found in one of Leo’s own *intavolature*. Musical Example 7 shows how Leo’s *intavolatura* in D major³² (labelled *toccata* in some sources) connects almost the same series of small models or schemata linked together in *La Baldouina*: (1) an opening gambit, repeated, here with ascending triads, (2) a Prinner in the main key of D major, (3) a Prinner in the dominant key (A major), and (4) a Monte rising stepwise from ④ up to ①.

OPENING GAMBIT

PRINNER

PRINNER

MONTE

Musical Example 7 The opening of an *intavolatura* in D major by Leonardo Leo.

There are, of course, minor changes in how each model is presented. Leo, for instance, gives his first Prinner root-position basses, unlike the normal ④–③–②–① used by Greco. And Leo allows the close of his first Prinner to take on the role of the cadence that appears in *La Baldouina*. Such changes were dictated by taste, by the pacing of the music, and by a delight in what eighteenth-century authors termed the *ars combinatoria*, the “art of combinations.”

The return of this opening passage later in Leo’s *intavolatura* illustrates the freedom with which composers could recombine the models (see Musical Example 8). Because Leo would not need to modulate to A major in this second part of the *intavolatura*, he would not need the second Prinner. So he took the pattern of the *second* Prinner and used it as a first Prinner in the home key of D major. With the place of his second Prinner now empty, Leo proceeded directly to the Monte, adding in a long run of Fauxbourdon (parallel 6-3 chords) to keep this passage about the same length as the original version.

OPENING GAMBIT

PRINNER

MONTE

FAUXBOURDON

CADENCE

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is in D major (one sharp) and common time. It consists of three systems. The first system, 'OPENING GAMBIT', has six measures. The second system, 'MONTE', has six measures. The third system, 'FAUXBOURDON' and 'CADENCE', has six measures. Fingerings are indicated by circled numbers 1-6. Roman numerals are shown below the bass line in the Monte section.

Musical Example 8 A later passage from an *intavolatura* in D major by Leonardo Leo (cf. Mus. Ex. 7)

Notice that the harmonization of the first Prinner in Musical Example 8 (in Roman numerals, ii6 — I6 — ii7–vii6 — I) is different from the original first Prinner (IV — I — V — I). Different harmonies could color the same schema just as different clothes could cover the same human form. Leo took advantage of another type of artistic variation for the restatement of his Monte. In the original version a tenor voice introduced each “6” of the 5–6 sequence. In the second version (Mus. Ex. 8) it is the melody that runs down the scale to sound the “6.” Once the “6” is touched, the melody leaps up to prepare for its next descent.

The Spread of Italian Models

The influence of the Neapolitan conservatories was, as mentioned earlier, felt across Europe. Composers who had this elite conservatory training and such rich experiences with famous artists and teachers were highly sought after by the wealthiest courts. The musical talent and fashions enjoyed at the wealthiest courts were envied and desired by courts less wealthy. So even in provincial courts many local musicians were at pains to learn this style. J. S. Bach, for

instance, studied the Italian style in depth while working at small German courts, and he even adapted parts of a Mass by Durante for his own use (BWV Anh 26). In a work like his G-major invention (BWV 781), one can hear not only the texture of a Neapolitan intavolatura, but also the same series of models used by Greco and Leo (see Musical Example 9). In his invention he set out, much like Greco, an opening gambit of triadic motion (here with the bass echoing the treble to present the Meyer schema³³), a Prinner in the home key (G major), a Prinner in the key of the dominant (D major), an abbreviated Monte, and a final cadence.

The image displays a musical score for J.S. Bach's Two-Part Invention No. 10, BWV 781, in G major. The score is divided into four sections: 'OPENING GAMBIT', 'PRINNER', 'MONTE', and 'CADENCE'. The music is written for two staves, treble and bass clef, in 3/8 time. Fingerings are indicated by circled numbers 1-5. The 'OPENING GAMBIT' (measures 1-5) features a treble line starting with a G4 and a bass line starting with a G2. The 'PRINNER' section (measures 6-10) shows a treble line starting with a G4 and a bass line starting with a D3. The 'MONTE' section (measures 11-12) features a treble line starting with a G4 and a bass line starting with a G2. The 'CADENCE' section (measures 13-14) features a treble line starting with a G4 and a bass line starting with a G2. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and accidentals.

Musical Example 9 Two-Part Invention No. 10, in G Major, by J. S. Bach (BWV 781, ca. 1720)

This is not to claim that Bach ever heard a work by Greco. Both composers were, during their lifetimes, essentially regional composers. But Greco and other Neapolitan masters trained so many students who went to work in German courts that the effect was as if their own compositions had been widely distributed in the North. Greco, for example, trained Nicola Porpora (1686–1768), who would later give lessons in composition to Joseph Haydn. Similarly, Durante and Leo trained Giuseppe Bonno (1711–1788), who would then teach composition to Carl Ditters (later known as von Dittersdorf). As the highest ranking Kapellmeister in Vienna, Bonno was influential in promoting the Neapolitan style of composition as the courtly ideal, especially since it was the Austrian emperor Charles VI who had paid for his ten-year

apprenticeship in Naples.

The international galant style, taught so effectively in Naples, was something well known to both Haydn and Mozart. Haydn, as mentioned, had studied composition with the Neapolitan maestro Porpora, and credited him with being his most important teacher. Even Haydn's boyhood master at the St. Stephen's choir school in Vienna, Georg Reutter (the younger), had studied with Caldara and other Italian masters in Rome and Venice. The reliance on Italian compositional models in Haydn's training was thus pervasive. Many of the same models found in *La Baldouina* recur frequently in Haydn's early works. Musical Example 11 shows the opening section of Haydn's keyboard sonata in D major from 1767, originally titled a *divertimento*. An opening gambit leads to a Prinner in the home key. When those measures are repeated an octave higher (mm. 5–8), Haydn accelerates the descent of the Prinner so that it ends a step lower (♯ in m. 8 instead of ♯) on a half cadence. As in *La Baldouina* or in the similar passages shown above by Leo or Bach, the key has shifted to the dominant (for Haydn, A major). That may explain why the next passage (Monte, mm. 9–16) can be remembered as being in A major, with the A dominant-seventh chord (m. 9) resolving to the subdominant of A major (♯, m. 10) rather than to the tonic of D major (neither interpretation excludes the other). When Haydn repeats his Monte (mm. 17–21), he uses the same type as in *La Baldouina*, ascending all the way from ♯ to ① in the bass (the melodic downbeats of mm. 18–20 are long appoggiaturas that resolve to the same scale degrees that Greco used in *La Baldouina*).

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano sonata in D major by Joseph Haydn. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff.

 - The first system (measures 1-7) is divided into two parts: 'OPENING GAMBIT' (measures 1-4) and 'PRINNER' (measures 5-7). Fingerings are indicated by circled numbers: 1, 4, 3, 2, 1 in the first part; 6, 5, 4, 3, 1 in the second part. A trill (tr) is marked above the fourth measure.

 - The second system (measures 8-14) is labeled 'MONTE'. It features a melodic line with triplets and a bass line with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Fingerings include 2, 4, and 5.

 - The third system (measures 15-21) is also labeled 'MONTE'. The melodic line continues with triplets and a bass line with eighth-note accompaniment. Fingerings include 5, 6, 5, 6, 5, 6, 5, 7, and 1.

Music Example 10 Joseph Haydn, sonata in D major, 1767, for the Esterházy court

The musical models for phrases and groups of phrases were like Preissler’s stick figures. That is, they were simple designs of “this can connect to this, and then to that.” Quite different types of graphical models were used to create a head, torso, or major limb. The musical models for the connection of phrases were similarly simple, as in “a Prinner can be followed by another Prinner or a cadence, and then a Monte might be appropriate.” Likewise the models for the individual schemata like the Prinner or Monte were of a different type, one that emphasized counterpoint, rhythm and meter, and specific scale degrees. There were dozens of these schemata, which is one reason why this art took so many years to master.

One of the standard opening gambits had its roots in the seventeenth-century ground bass often called *La Romanesca*.³⁴ Two instances of more galant version of the Romanesca are shown in another intavolatura by Greco³⁵ (Musical Example 11), where it occurs first in G minor and then in Bb major.

ROMANESCA CADENCE ROMANESCA CADENCE

Music Example 11 Gaetano Greco, intavolatura in G minor, Naples, ca. 1690?

This type of Romanesca, a favorite of Neapolitan maestros, became a standard opening gambit throughout the eighteenth century. The young Mozart appears to have learned it on his first international tour as an eight-year-old boy.³⁶ In Musical Example 12, the close connection between the pairing of a Romanesca and cadence in Greco (Mus. Ex. 11, mm. 1–2) and the same pairing in Mozart’s early G-major violin sonata should be evident. In fact the whole series of schemata in Mozart’s sonata closely follows the model of Greco’s *La Baldouina*, though with different details characteristic of a style two generations later. Mozart’s Monte, for instance, uses a number of decorative chromatic passing tones (mm. 10–14) that would have been out of place in the simpler, more austere style of Greco. Similarly, Mozart’s use of a deceptive cadence so early in the opening section (m. 4) is something seen only when, in the second half of the eighteenth century, techniques were being developed to help extend the small models of the past to the larger dimensions then gaining favor.

OPENING GAMBIT
ROMANESCA

CADENCE (PRINNER) CADENCE

PRINNER PRINNER

11 MONTE

The image displays a musical score for Mozart's violin sonata in G major, KV11. The score is presented in a grand staff format, with the treble clef (representing the violin part) and the bass clef (representing the harpsichord part) on the same page. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score is divided into several sections: 'OPENING GAMBIT', 'ROMANESCA', 'CADENCE (PRINNER)', 'CADENCE', 'PRINNER', 'PRINNER', and '11 MONTE'. The 'OPENING GAMBIT' and 'ROMANESCA' sections are marked with circled numbers 1 through 7. The 'CADENCE (PRINNER)' section is marked with circled numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The 'PRINNER' sections are marked with circled numbers 1 through 6. The '11 MONTE' section is marked with circled numbers 4, 5, 6, 7, and 1. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and ornaments, and is accompanied by fingerings indicated by circled numbers.

Musical Example 12 Mozart, from his violin sonata in G major, KV11 (1764), London. For simplicity of reading, the violin part is here incorporated with the treble harpsichord part.

Again, it is unlikely that Mozart knew even a single work by Greco. In that world of maestros and apprentices, models were widely shared and copied, especially if they came from influential musical centers like Naples. Mozart probably learned the Romanesca in Paris, where several generations of Italian musicians had been favored at the royal courts. But in truth he could have learned it from trained musicians at the courts of Munich, Brussels, or any of the cities through which he toured and performed. By virtue of his great talent, he had, like the boys in the Naples conservatories who would one day become his main competition, the opportunity to meet and converse with a number of great masters. His apprenticeship was played out in dozens of cities and courts during the decade 1763–73, and his examinations were the public performances of his compositions. Unlike Spontini, who was not yet a *mastricello* at age 21, Mozart achieved the required perfection of craft by age ten or eleven. Mozart did not, however, receive the extended guidance and practical advice from famous opera composers that Spontini enjoyed in Naples, and hence Spontini, even if technically and artistically inferior to Mozart, nevertheless had a far more successful career.

Summary

In the eighteenth century, apprenticeship was the normal form of education for any craft, and that included the fine arts, theater, and music. Boys and occasionally girls were given over to masters at a young age. For a decade or more the master would house, feed, clothe, and teach the child his “mystery” in return for the child’s labor. The focus of this training was on the imitation and reproduction of models or exemplars. Elizabetta Pasquini has noted the close connection between the teaching of exemplars in the counterpoint treatise of Padre Martini in Bologna—his *L’Esemplare, o sia saggio fondamentale pratico di contrappunto*—and the methods of teaching penmanship or drawing.³⁷ The designs in the drawing manuals of Johann David Preissler illustrate the diverse skills and the different types of models that an apprentice draftsman needed to learn before qualifying as a journeyman or master. A similar range of skills and models were learned by apprentice composers.

In the old English system of legal training, ordinary aspiring lawyers were apprenticed as clerks to a solicitor, from whom they would learn his craft. A few elite boys were accepted at the inns of court, four centers for legal training connected with the royal courts and intended to produce barristers, the higher class of lawyers. The four conservatories of Naples functioned much like the inns of court in London. Unlike the individual apprentice, who was limited not only to the skills and advice of a single master but also to a narrow range of acquaintances and professional experiences, the apprentices at the inns of court or at the Neapolitan conservatories grew up surrounded by dozens and dozens of other talented apprentices, learned from renowned masters who worked at the highest levels of the craft, and observed what was required of someone who hoped to serve a royal court. Viewed from an economic perspective, the conservatories of Naples perfected an industrialization of craft training that was so successful that it led to one of the first globalizations, with their students displacing local musicians in places as far away as Russia and Mexico.

In the past, the *regole* of the Neapolitan maestros have often been viewed as primers for thoroughbass. This view stems from a later age, when music was believed to be a type of system or machine that, like a subject in physics or chemistry, could be understood through a basic formula or principle. The idea of a “science of harmony” was typical of that view. But when viewed from the earlier world of apprenticeship, one can see that the *regole* were collections of small models. Larger models were contained in the instructional compositions of partimenti, solfeggi, and intavolature. When an apprentice had internalized all the models, he could practice combining them by realizing partimenti, which was only a small step away from free improvisation and composition. Ample evidence for this mode of musical thinking has been preserved in eighteenth-century compositions. Simple models from the generation of Gaetano Greco were continuously copied for over a century, becoming a pervasive foundation of the international galant style. Even the works of Haydn and Mozart display strong traces of the Italian models that they learned as boys. Although it is not common today to approach the analysis of eighteenth-century music from the point of view of how it was taught to and learned

by young apprentices, their intense, extended training has doubtless left its marks on their mature compositions. In the analysis of their music, we should, at the very least, be cognizant of the patterns that were second nature to these musicians.

In 1841 the Parisian committee of the Prix de Rome received a *Te deum* from its prize winner the previous year, the young Charles Gounod. To win this fellowship for study in Rome he had had to take several examinations, including the writing of a fugue to be judged by masters from the Paris Conservatory. In Rome, now as a journeyman composer, he had composed this *Te deum* as, in the language of guilds, a proof piece demonstrating his attainment of a master's command of the craft. In something of an historical irony, the committee chose the retired Spontini to be the examiner of Gounod's *Te deum*. Like so many masters over the centuries, Spontini filled his report with stern comments that detailed error after error.³⁸ And like so many apprentices and journeyman before him, Gounod bore the criticisms of the master and went on to a successful career.

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